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Inclusion Development Programme

Supporting children with Behavioural,
Emotional and Social Difficulties:
Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years
Foundation Stage



Minimum specification		
	PC	Mac
CPU	Pentium III or greater	PowerPC G4 (867MHz or faster)
RAM	128 MB	512 MB
Hard drive	100 MB space	100 MB space
CD drive	24 x speed	24 x speed
SVGA graphics card	16 bit colour	16 bit colour
Minimum screen resolution	1024 x 768	1024 x 768
Sound card, speakers, or headphones	16 bit	Standard
Keyboard and mouse	Yes (Microsoft compatible)	Yes
Operating system	Windows 2000 or later	Mac OS X or later

Instructions for running the disk

Insert the DVD-ROM into your disk tray. Your computer may automatically run the program if you have a feature called **Auto run** enabled. If it does not automatically run, use the following steps.

- For PC users, select My Computer, and then select the disk icon to open.
- For Mac users, select the disk icon on your desktop to open.
- Select the file '**index.htm**'.

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Please check all website references carefully to see if they have changed and substitute other references where appropriate.

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Introduction

What is the Inclusion Development Programme?

The Inclusion Development programme (IDP) is part of the government's strategy for children with special educational needs (SEN), outlined in *Removing barriers to achievement: the government's strategy for SEN* (DfES 0117/2004). This four-year programme (2008–11) will provide support materials for teachers and practitioners working with children with a range of SEN of all ages, in settings from Early Years through to secondary.

The IDP aims to:

- build the independent capacity of schools and settings by helping teachers and practitioners to develop the skills needed for the early identification of children with high incidence needs;
- strengthen leadership and strategic approaches to inclusion and achievement of children with high incidence needs by providing guidance and support for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), leaders and managers.

What is the focus of this Early Years IDP?

This is the third booklet in the IDP series and it focuses on supporting all children in developing behavioural, emotional and social skills, thus avoiding later difficulties in learning and development. It also helps practitioners who are working with children whose behaviour, emotional and social development is already causing concern. In addition to this booklet there is a linked DVD and web-based e-learning module.

The previous booklets in this series are:

- *Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs: Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage;*
- *Supporting children on the autism spectrum: Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage.*

The complete IDP materials can be downloaded from the National Strategies website:

www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies

Links between IDP and other materials

How do these materials fit with the following:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS);
- Social and emotional aspects of development (SEAD);
- Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL).

The Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS is 'the statutory framework for all those working with children from birth to five' (DCSF, 2008) which sets out the principles and practice required for effective provision. The IDP materials provide detailed support for practitioners to give due consideration to children's behavioural, emotional and social needs in their implementation of the EYFS. The EYFS package (booklets, posters, cards and CD: DCSF 00261-2008 PCK-EN) should be used alongside these materials. The EYFS principles, requirements and effective practice guidance underpin the Early Years IDP, and you should refer to them as you work through the materials: they provide a wealth of additional guidance on effective practice.

Social and emotional aspects of development (SEAD)

Materials consist of a booklet for practitioners (DCSF 00707-2008BKT-EN), CD-ROM (DCSF 00840-2008CDO-EN) and booklet for local authority trainers (DCSF 00708-2008BKT-EN).

These materials are intended as training materials to support continuing professional development (CPD) for practitioners at individual, group or local authority level. The materials provide suggestions, case study examples and information to support practitioners to develop more effective practice in supporting children's personal, social and emotional development.

Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL)

SEAL is a whole-school programme that supports practitioners to help children develop social and emotional skills. The SEAL folder is reproduced on the SEAD CD and the materials include a range of ideas for assemblies, staff development and learning opportunities guidance, information and resources.

Both SEAD and SEAL support practitioners in implementing all the principles of the EYFS, particularly Positive Relationships and the personal, social and emotional area of learning and development. The IDP supports these principles and the EYFS commitment to inclusive practice. 'Inclusion is not optional: children have defined entitlements in this area and settings have legal responsibilities.' (EYFS Statutory Framework, p.9)

How to use these materials

Note: Where this booklet refers to 'parents' or 'mothers, fathers and carers' these terms are intended to include any significant carers – step-parents, adoptive parents, etc.

These materials provide more detailed information and examples of effective practice to support children whose behavioural, emotional and social development is causing concern.

- Through each theme of the EYFS this booklet identifies underpinning knowledge which may help practitioners to extend their understanding of children's behavioural, emotional and social development.
- Both the booklet and the e-learning module provide practical suggestions, examples of effective practice and prompts for reflection to help practitioners develop realistic expectations of children's behaviour.
- This booklet and the e-learning module should be used in a group with colleagues to form the basis of CPD sessions.
- The materials can also be used by individual practitioners.
- The e-learning module reflects the content of the booklet and provides a further opportunity to reflect and develop your practice through the use of video examples and activities.

Suggestions are offered to encourage a professional problem-solving approach to concerns about children's behavioural, emotional and social development.

As behavioural, emotional and social development is such a complex topic and each individual situation is different, these materials are not able to provide 'off the shelf' solutions to respond to children's behaviour. However, the materials do show how effective practice and high-quality care with positive interactions will give children the best possible support.

Is the IDP suitable for all practitioners?

The IDP is intended for all practitioners but also takes account of the particular roles some have in supporting colleagues and families such as:

- key person
- childminders
- special educational needs coordinators (SENCO) or behaviour coordinators
- leaders and managers.

All practitioners play a significant role in influencing children's developing understanding of how people relate to each other. Early experiences of positive and responsive relationships are known to be a considerable protective factor which supports future mental health. Enabling children to feel secure and develop a healthy response to the full range of emotions will contribute significantly to their well-being.

Key person

A key person has special responsibilities for working with a small group of children giving them consistent care and emotional support and building relationships with their mothers, fathers and carers. The way in which the key person models behaviour and helps children and parents cope with their feelings is very important for children's learning and development.

Childminders

A childminder is uniquely placed to be an effective key person for children and families, nurturing children's attachment and working closely with mothers, fathers and carers on issues related to development and behaviour. However, working with children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties can be particularly challenging if you are working alone. Childminders should consider joining the local childminding network or making links with their local children's centre and/or other EYFS settings to gain further support and to work through these materials.

SENCO or Behaviour coordinator

All EYFS settings registered with Ofsted are required to have regard to the *Special educational needs Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001). This requires the designation of a member of staff to promote inclusive practice and implement the setting's inclusion policy. According to statutory guidance there should also be a named practitioner who is responsible for behaviour management issues. All staff remain responsible for ensuring that all children's needs are met. The SENCO will take the lead in establishing and maintaining positive communication with key people including mothers, fathers, carers, leaders, managers and any other involved agencies or support teams.

Leaders and managers

Strong, clear leadership, which involves all staff in principled problem solving, will contribute significantly to positive relationships with families and inclusive experiences for children. In the same way that children learn from adult role models, leaders and managers are role models for other adults in the setting. It is essential that leaders and managers take part in the CPD sessions as part of the staff team. As practitioners working together through the materials, you will identify areas of your practice that are particularly successful and some that need further development. Practitioners will need the support of their leader or manager to plan and implement changes in the setting.

Terminology, definitions and implications

Terminology

Sometimes adults get anxious about a child's responses, and about their role in supporting children's behavioural learning. They try to reduce their feelings of being deskilled by finding a label to apply to the child. There are many terms which are heard in everyday conversation these days related to behaviour, such as 'hyperactive', 'aggressive', 'obsessive', 'autistic', 'disturbed' or showing 'problem behaviour'. It is important to remember that many of these terms are specialised medical diagnoses or criteria-based descriptions and not appropriate to be used in connection with the usual range of children's behaviour in our settings.

Definitions

The *Special educational needs Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001) identifies four areas of special educational needs (SEN):

- cognition and learning
- behavioural, emotional and social development
- communication and interaction
- sensory and physical needs.

Children may also have a combination of special needs related to the four areas.

The SEN Code of Practice describes behavioural, emotional and social difficulty as a learning difficulty where children demonstrate characteristics such as:

- being withdrawn or isolated
- being disruptive and disturbing
- being hyperactive and lacking concentration
- having immature social skills
- presenting challenging behaviours arising from other complex special needs.

(DfES, 2001)

Whether a child is considered to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties will depend on a range of factors including the:

- nature of the presenting difficulties
- frequency
- persistence
- severity
- effect on the child's behaviour and emotional well-being compared with what might normally be expected for a particular age range.

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) sets out the duties for all schools and settings.

- Children with behavioural emotional and social difficulties may be considered to have both SEN and a disability.
- In line with the Disability Discrimination Act children with a disability must not be treated 'less favourably' and reasonable adjustments must be made for them.

It is concerning that research currently shows that there is an over-representation of certain ethnic groups in specialist provision for older children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. These over-represented groups are children whose heritage is:

- Black Caribbean
- Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- Traveller of Irish Heritage
- Gypsy/Roma.

'60% of older children in specialist provision for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, also have other identified special educational needs.'

(DCSF, 2008, *The education of children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as a special educational need*, p.15)

A practitioner asks

Isn't this just a way of making excuses for naughty children?

The introductory section of the e-learning module also explores this question.

The label 'naughty' has a variety of negative meanings but describing a child as 'naughty' does not give any clues about what has gone wrong, how to improve things, or that anyone will help. Understanding behaviour as an area of learning leads to the effective use of skills of observation, planning and assessment to help children to make progress. For example, a child observed to hit out as he or she approaches other children playing is likely to be helped by a focus on ways of asking others to play, rather than consistently being referred to as naughty or told that he or she should not hit.

As children develop a sense of themselves and others, positive attitudes from those around them are most effective in developing positive attitudes to others.

The rest of this booklet explores the range of factors which may influence children's learning about behaviour and the significant role EYFS practitioners have in supporting and extending that learning.

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A Unique Child

EYFS Principle

Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Commitments

1.1 Child Development: Babies and children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Every area of development – physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social and emotional – is equally important.

1.2 Inclusive Practice: The diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected. No child or family is discriminated against.

1.3 Keeping Safe: Young children are vulnerable. They develop resilience when their physical and psychological well-being is protected by adults.

1.4 Health and Well-being: Children's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being and is supported by attention to these aspects.

Ways in which these commitments can be seen in effective practice relating to behaviour, emotional and social development are explored throughout this section.

Developmental information

As human beings we communicate our emotions through our behaviour. We learn gradually about the ways in which people relate to each other. In this process we learn about the range of possible responses from those around us and the possible reactions to our behaviour. It is important to remember that children in the EYFS are at the very beginning of this learning journey and can sometimes be overloaded with examples of other people expressing their emotions.

Reflect and note

Brain development begins a few days after conception and continues through adolescence. During the early stages of brain development the spinal cord is formed and neurons' functional roles are established. By the time a baby is born his or her brain ' [] has various systems ready to go, but many more that are incomplete and will only develop in response to other human input.' (Gerhardt, 2004, p.18)¹

It is neither nature nor nurture alone which determines how we relate to the world but a subtle blending and interplay of both.

We know that early attachment relationships help children's brains to develop the connections between brain cells that are needed for future development and learning. When children have secure relationships with care givers they feel confident to explore the world and learn about others. When adults do not respond positively to their emotional and physical needs, children can become stressed. At times of stress their bodies release the hormone cortisol which affects the brain by impeding the development of those vital connections between brain cells.

¹ Extract from Gerhardt, S. (2004) Why love matters. How affection shapes a baby's brain, p.18, p.30, p.148. © Taylor and Francis Group LLC - Books. Used with kind permission.

The importance of attachment

Further information about the importance of attachment can be found in the Positive Relationships section of the e-learning module, in the SEAD practitioner booklet (DCSF, 2008, p.13) and a booklet published by the Family and Parenting Institute *Early Home Learning Matters* (Dalzell, Watson and Massey, 2009, p.16).

Early communication between children and their main adult carer is the basis for a secure attachment – the foundation for future relationships. Basic needs are met, there is emotional security, stimulation and interest in the child as an individual in his or her own right.

There are a variety of reasons why initial attachment relationships may not be as secure as everyone would hope. These reasons may include combinations of:

- parental illness
- illness affecting the child
- post-natal depression
- parents being unable to provide comfort and safety in times of upset and stress.

It is the practitioner's role to complement and enhance the relationships which provide attachment and security for the child. You will do this by:

- providing consistency
- being tuned into individual needs
- taking time to understand the child's communications
- involving mothers, fathers, carers and family members in your developing understanding of the child.

By consciously working in this way you will demonstrate your commitment to work in partnership with families to support each unique child.

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Implications for practice

Practitioners see children interacting with other children and through observation can begin to identify the characteristic ways in which a child responds to others. All children are different and behave differently but there are some types of behaviour which can give cause for concern and some things to think about to begin to help.

Please note: Most children will display elements of these behaviours at various times. It is only if there becomes a sustained pattern of one form of interaction that you would become concerned.

Withdrawn behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who is not likely to join socially with other children or express emotions freely.

What might we do?

- Do not pressure; trying to force a child to take part or do something is likely to make the child more withdrawn and possibly fearful.
- Use what you and the family knows about the child's interests and social links with adults and children to encourage more frequent relaxed and joyful moments.

Confident behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who is often first to try something new and likely to take a leading role socially.

What might we do?

- Model discussing finding out about a new piece of equipment or toy. Demonstrate that it is acceptable not to be able to do something or know something. Sometimes confident behaviour masks a child's anxiety or need to show that he or she is 'good at everything'.
- Observe, note and discuss with families which activities the child spends most time involved in and the characteristic social interactions which take place. Children may avoid things they don't feel they are good at or able to succeed with immediately.

Shy behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who is likely to be quiet and may 'hide' behind an adult or more assertive peer.

What might we do?

- Allow time for the child to watch an activity or routine first to be sure of what will happen and how it might feel. The child is also likely to watch for the range of emotions which might be displayed and how these are responded to by others, adults and children.
- Observe, note and share with families if there are particular times of day when the child is more reserved than usual. This is likely to be at the beginning of the day, end of the day, mealtimes and if there are any unexpected changes to routines.

Anxious behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who can be reluctant to get involved in activities, quick to take offence or express feeling left out socially.

What might we do?

- Observe, note and discuss with mothers, fathers and carers the patterns of behaviour which indicate increase or decrease of anxiety levels. This may include changes in facial expressions or body language.
- Identify activities which seem to decrease anxiety levels and have these readily accessible so adults can encourage their use as anxiety increases.

Very active behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who is likely to be very physical both indoors and outdoors, and also finds it difficult to be still, particularly when others are physically close.

What might we do?

- Review the environment of your setting and the opportunity for large physical and movement-focused activities. Consider times of day which are most challenging for the child and how the periods of more physical activities outdoors could be used.
- Observe, note and share with families changes in behaviour before and after physical activity. Outdoor opportunities reduce the levels of the stress hormone cortisol for all children. Being inside for long periods of time with restricted space often leads to children displaying unsettled, fractious behaviour and having more squabbles. It may take several weeks before the increased access to outdoors positively impacts on overall behaviour.

Controlling behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who is usually dominant in a group and will 'take over' an activity if a child is not doing it 'correctly'.

What might we do?

- Observe, note and share with mothers, fathers and carers activities when the child is most likely to display controlling behaviour. Contrast this with your observations of when the child is at ease and relaxed with others.
- Take time to talk through an activity with the child before the child gets involved. Highlight different kinds of 'help' such as telling, guessing and talking about rather than taking over.

Aggressive behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who tends to hit out when things do not go the child's way, likely to get easily frustrated and may think that others are deliberately trying to upset him or her.

What might we do?

- Observe, note and share with families situations when the child is most likely to display this behaviour. Identify an equal number of times when the child is least likely to react in this way to contrast and explore.

- Consider and discuss with colleagues and families what the child may be communicating through this behaviour. Possibilities might be that the child is overwhelmed by emotions, unable to find another way to express feelings, feeling frustrated, threatened or helpless, or perceives unfairness, feels the need to hit first before being hit, is acting out things which have happened to him or her.

Victim behaviour

What might this look like?

A child who is often on the receiving end of others' verbal or physical attacks.

What might we do?

- Observe, note and discuss with mothers, fathers and carers the situations in which this tends to happen. Identify a reasonable response which the child could begin to use initially with support, such as saying, 'Go away!' or 'Stop!' Introduce the response with all children and families as a response which will be used in the setting to someone doing something they do not like. Provide opportunities for practising by using role-play, stories, puppets, etc.
- Consider how to involve colleagues and family in ways that increase 'victim' children's confidence in themselves and their achievements.

Possible links between language development and behaviour

Secure attachment helps children to feel at ease and able to relate successfully to others. It also facilitates the development of language and communication skills. Children who are developing early language (particularly those who have a language delay or disorder, are not securely attached or not getting positive role modelling from adults around them) will often use their behaviour as a quicker more effective means of communication. This may include hitting, slapping, pushing, biting, screaming and running away.

What might we do?

- Observe, note and discuss with mothers, fathers and carers the language children use confidently to make their feelings known.
- Share with families the context in which children are less able to use their language and more inclined to use behavioural responses. Identify a particular word or phrase which the child can use in the context.
- Adult attention both at home and in the setting should focus on making sure that the response the child experiences when they use appropriate language or gesture is as effective as if they had hit, bitten or screamed.
- Ensure that all colleagues are aware of the strategies which are being used and that they are able to talk confidently, with all parents, about supporting children in their development of language and behaviour. In particular, the ways in which language and behaviour impact on each other.
- Review with all staff the use of photographs in supporting children's developing communication and behaviour.
- Improve your own knowledge and the support offered to children and parents by using ideas from the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme. For example the talking hot spots activity on page 17 in the Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Early Years Lead Practitioners and/or the audit of language provision on page 23 of the same guidance.

- Implement the examples and suggestions in the other Inclusion Development Programme materials:
 - Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs: guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - Supporting children on the autism spectrum: guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Complete the audit from the Social Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD) practitioner booklet (pp.54–58) in particular the 'Child's Voice' section. Use the information to plan specific improvements to your provision and professional development for all practitioners.

Children who speak English as an additional language

The development of language and behaviour are inextricably linked and filled with frustrations for all children. Children who are learning English as an additional language may be more inclined to use non-verbal means of communicating their needs. This may be misinterpreted by other children and adults.

Remember these points.

- Making yourself understood and your needs known can be highly frustrating without a commonly understood language.
- It takes longer to get your message across to someone who doesn't have the same language or experiences as you.
- EYFS settings are very busy places – for children who are learning English as an additional language it is hard work understanding what is being communicated to them and very tiring to listen very intently, try to translate, keep up with what is going on and not miss their turn at something.
- Without a sensitive response from the adults these children are likely to lose confidence and try to speak less.

There is further guidance on valuing bi-lingualism and working with children learning English as an additional language in the following publications:

Supporting children learning English as an additional language: Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage (search using the reference: 00683-2007-BKT-EN)

Every Child a Talker: guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners (search using the reference: 00854-2008DOM-EN) pp. 53–57

A practitioner asks

If a child is kicking, pushing and hurting other children how can I protect the other children and myself?

The Unique Child and Positive Relationships sections of the e-learning module also explore issues related to this question.

First, remember that no one likes to be hurt and that to hurt others is to communicate that you are feeling overwhelmed by emotions which you cannot deal with by yourself. For children in the EYFS it is developmentally appropriate that they will at times feel overwhelmed. They are not yet able to think about or communicate either their own or others' emotions in any detail. Their responses will usually be immediate and reactive to the situation as they see it in the moment.

Practitioners and parents will experience a range of emotions too. These might include questioning their skills, anger and distress at being hurt or challenged and at losing face in front of other adults and children. Mothers, fathers and carers will often feel even more overwhelmed and helpless than practitioners at such times.

The opportunity to share your concerns and to work out solutions needs to be part of your approach, otherwise there is a danger that you could start to blame the child which would not be helpful for the child, the mother, father, carer or the setting.

It may feel that a child is 'always' hurting and 'never' able to be with anyone else. Accurate observation will identify the real frequency of hurting incidents and inform realistic expectations of progress towards a reduction in the number of incidents. There are no quick-fix strategies to stop the unwanted behaviour immediately so it is also important to plan to minimise the effects of the hurting. This is likely to include reviewing staff deployment so that, in the short term at least, adults take turns to focus on the child who has been hurting.

- Review your collective knowledge of the child. As well as the child's key person, all staff remain responsible for the child's care and well-being.
- Other parents may be concerned about their children's safety. Discussions with them will include putting behaviour in a developmentally appropriate context, reiterating setting policies and approaches to behavioural learning and explaining the ways in which these approaches will reduce the likelihood of others being hurt.
- Observations and discussions with colleagues and the child's family will help to identify times and situations when difficulties are **least** likely to occur. This is the information which will enable you to help most effectively. The details of these times will help you to recognise facial expressions, body language and signals which indicate that the child is calm and relaxed. Children don't hurt others when they are calm and relaxed.
- The aim is to reduce the hurting incidents and increase the relaxed, calm times. Members of the child's family can be particularly helpful in identifying calming activities and are likely to welcome the opportunity to be able to do something specific to improve things.
- Conversations with the child's mother, father and carer will need to balance the action you will take when there is another hurting incident, and the action you will take to help the child's behavioural learning progress through this difficult phase.

Pause for thought

Key person or childminder

Each of the children in your group is an individual and responds differently. Identify these points for each child.

- Do you regularly see each child express a range of emotions?
- What do you do which helps the child understand that there are different ways to express each emotion?
- What tells you that the child is happy, relaxed, anxious, worried, sad, angry or excited?
- Which activities help the child become calm?
- What actions can you take which help the child to become calm?
- Have the child's mother, father or carer noticed the same things?
- Which of your behaviours helps to de-escalate conflict situations?

SENCO/behaviour coordinator

How confident do you feel about:

- supporting professional problem-solving discussions with other staff to help a child with his or her current behaviour difficulties?
- helping all mothers, fathers and carers to understand that a child who is hurting is still learning about how the social world works?
- ensuring that a child whose behaviour is challenging is not discriminated against?
- finding local advice and support for children who are experiencing difficulty in learning about their emotions and behaviours?

Leaders and managers

Consider the following questions.

- What different opportunities do you provide for mothers, fathers and carers to share their views about their child's behavioural learning in the first month of the child's attendance?
- What different opportunities do you provide for your staff team to learn about each other's views about children's behaviour and how do you agree on the approaches you will implement in your setting?
- In what ways have you noticed children's behaviour generally changes as they experience joining, belonging and preparing to leave a group?
- In what ways do you support a child and the child's mother, father or carer when the child's behaviour involves hurting other children or adults?
- In what ways do you support your staff team when they have concerns about a child's behaviour?

Positive Relationships

EYFS Principle

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

Commitments

2.1 Respecting Each Other: Every interaction is based on caring professional relationships and respectful acknowledgement of the feelings of children and their families.

2.2 Parents as Partners: Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together in Early Years settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning.

2.3 Supporting Learning: Warm, trusting relationships with knowledgeable adults support children's learning more effectively than any amount of resources.

2.4 Key Person: A key person has special responsibilities for working with a small number of children, giving them the reassurance to feel safe and cared for and building relationships with their parents.

Ways in which these commitments can be seen in effective practice relating to behaviour, emotional and social development are explored throughout this section.

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Everyone smiles in the same language.

This is a good starting point for our relationship with mothers, fathers, carers and children.

Whatever stage the children are at in the EYFS they are still learning about how the social world works. The adults at home and in the setting share an interest in the children's developmental progress.

The practitioner's role is to find a way to bridge the gap between home and setting. The most effective starting point is to be able to talk in a friendly positive way about your interest in the child as an individual. As you share a balance of your excitement, pleasure and concern about their children, mothers, fathers and carers will increasingly feel able to share how they feel things are going for their children.

Fathers, in particular, are often left out of the regular communication between setting and home. Research shows that children whose fathers are involved in their learning have better mental health and do better at school.

(Dalzell, Watson and Massey, 2009, p.7)

A practitioner asks

I try to develop a working partnership with mothers and fathers but they don't have time or won't make the effort to meet with me.

The Positive Relationships section of the e-learning module also explores issues related to this question.

Being a mother or father is to have the most difficult job in the world. As a new parent, you are suddenly responsible for another person, one who is initially totally dependent on you but then begins to assert his or her own personality. The confidence you have in your skills as a parent are likely to vary at different stages in the child's life. Some parents feel most confident when their child is a baby and is totally dependent. Others feel most confident once the child has developed some language and is able to tell them when something is wrong. For many mothers and fathers the first few days at home after the birth of their child are a very anxious time. If extended family support is not available they can be isolated and anxious about caring for this fragile, helpless person who has joined the family. This can be a time when there is considerable pressure on the relationships between the mother, father and other adults. Tensions arise when the baby cries, feeds and sleeps. Differences of opinion about approaches to parenting can be hotly debated and family traditions challenged.

Bringing a child to an EYFS provision can be the first extended daily contact parents have with childcare professionals. Mothers, fathers and carers may feel that this is a time when they are judged on their parenting skills, not just once, but on a twice-daily basis. It is likely that mothers, fathers and carers will therefore be very sensitive to any comments or attitudes which could be seen as communicating disapproval.

From a practitioner's point of view the beginning and end of the day can be very difficult times. There are more adults around who you may feel are looking at your interactions in a critical way. There are unsettled, tired children who are unsure whether setting rules or home rules now apply and which adult is keeping them safe. Practitioners may be tired and keen to finish their working day or attend to other tasks. Some mothers, fathers and carers want to know every detail of their child's day and question the reasons for your responses and decisions.

It is the easy option to reduce the communication with mothers, fathers and carers to factual information about eating, toileting and sleeping. If this is established as the routine then everyone can collude to keep safely to these topics. Increasingly, there will be relief that no difficult questions are raised or other topics explored. In the short term this may be fine. In the longer term it makes establishing an honest, useful working partnership with mothers, fathers and carers very difficult. Where this restricted communication is established and then discussion of concerns about behaviour is needed, it is likely to escalate concerns unnecessarily and lead everyone to be defensive.

Here are some effective ways forward.

- Review with current mothers, fathers and carers all the ways in which you communicate with them.
- Identify how information will be given about events, routines, etc.

- Identify daily, weekly, monthly, half-termly, termly and annual opportunities for communicating with mothers, fathers and carers.
- Identify appropriate content for each communication opportunity and share with mothers, fathers and carers to ensure that over the months and terms there is continuity. In most cases the daily information will be discussed in more depth weekly, reviewed monthly and so on.
- Identify with mothers, fathers and carers which forms of communication would be most useful for each level of communication. This could include, text, email, phone, meeting, or home visits. Be aware of establishing clear protocols about electronic information sharing to maintain professional boundaries.

Further information and ideas can be found in the Working with Parents e-learning module and in Dalzell, Watson and Massey (2009).

Developmental information

Often children will have their behavioural, emotional and social needs recognised first by practitioners in an EYFS setting. This is likely to be the first time the child has been away from the immediate family. The social demands of coping with being one of a group and sharing unfamiliar adult attention is likely to be very confusing and cause anxiety. For families this can be a very difficult and challenging time.

The following issues may arise.

- Mothers, fathers and carers will have a different relationship with the child from that of the practitioners. This means the child will respond differently in the setting and at home.
- Individual children may respond differently with particular practitioners, which can lead to families receiving mixed messages about the frequency and intensity of the child's behaviour.
- Families may be shocked, embarrassed, frightened, defensive or angry about the suggestion that their child's behaviour or understanding is different from other children's.

Your initial approaches to working in partnership with all families will need to be effective and flexible enough to maintain positive communication during the process of recognising each child's specific needs.

In the same way that you are helping children to learn that others will have a different view of a situation, you will be working to understand mothers', fathers', carers' and colleagues' views of children's responses.

A practitioner asks

A child I am working with at the moment is biting other children and adults several times a day. The parents say he does it at home too and they bite him back. What should I do?

The Positive Relationships section of the e-learning module also explore issues related to this question.

Biting always evokes strong feelings and adults often feel despair and at a loss as to how to stop it happening. It is particularly important to keep in mind what your response to the biting is teaching the child. For example, lots of adult reaction and excitement can give the message that this is a very effective way of getting attention. Biting a child in response to the child's biting gives a message that biting is something that adults do and that it is acceptable to bite someone smaller than you. This is obviously not acceptable.

Possible reasons for children biting are for them to:

- explore texture or taste through mouthing
- get something they want
- get attention
- express frustration
- stop someone from taking something of theirs
- stop someone invading their personal space
- transfer pain
- stop someone physically trying to make them do something against their will.

Developmentally, biting often occurs as young children are beginning to struggle with language and are asserting their own choices and wishes. In the initial stages of language development it is easy to understand that biting someone is a much quicker way to get the desired response than thinking through and articulating the necessary words. Children in the EYFS will express their current emotions but are only just beginning to learn about thinking about their responses. Their behaviour is more reactive than considered.

The first thing to remember if biting becomes an issue is that it is a temporary situation. It is only in very rare situations that teenagers or adults bite. In the majority of situations children will learn other more effective ways to communicate their feelings and needs.

All mothers, fathers and carers are anxious about biting, whether their child is doing the biting or being bitten. It is useful to identify and talk to all mothers, fathers and carers about the ways in which you respond to the biting incidents and why you use this approach. Giving suggestions of ways in which families can help is also useful. Giving feedback to families about effective strategies and action taken helps everyone to feel that something is being done.

As with all hurting behaviours, working from accurate observational evidence is essential. This will identify:

- the context in which the biting occurs
- the frequency at which it occurs
- who is involved.

Reflecting on the observations with colleagues and parents will help to gain insight into what children might be trying to communicate through this behaviour. The most effective strategies will be those which give a clear message that the behaviour is unacceptable and provide an alternative means for the children to communicate their message. If keywords or phrases are used, it is important that they are used with all children.

Careful thought needs to be given to what will be said to other children and adults when an incident occurs. It needs to be made clear that the child who bites is trying to communicate something and that adults will be helping that child to learn other ways of communicating. Although the behaviour is identified as unacceptable, the child is still liked, cared for and supported in his or her learning.

Consider protecting yourself. Be aware that there are likely to be more biting incidents in summer than winter. This is because there is more skin available and skin is more rewarding than fabric to bite. Wearing long sleeves therefore reduces the access to bare skin and minimises the likelihood of being bitten.

It is very important for practitioners to have realistic views of children's behaviour and to understand these points.

- Young children display how they are feeling in the moment; developmentally, they are not yet able to think about how their emotions change. They can observe how others respond but are unlikely to be able to think about why.
- Early verbal communication is related to the process of representing our thinking. It facilitates the ability to remember things and events.
- It takes a long time to work out our thoughts and those of others. At four or five years old children are just beginning to realise that other people:
 - have thoughts
 - think things which are different from the things they think
 - think and act on information which others know is not true.

A practitioner asks

What about the toddlers in my group who know exactly when they are doing something they shouldn't, they even look to an adult for a reaction before they do something!

The Positive Relationships section of the e-learning module also explores issues related to this question.

Once children begin to be able to move around without the help of an adult they are highly motivated to explore and find out about what they can see. They can now get to the things they have seen adults touching, using, moving and playing with. Until this point, in most cases, the sharing of interest in an object between adult and child has been a happy experience. Now that the child is able to take the initiative in indicating or choosing the object to be shared, adults suddenly begin to respond differently.

Looking to an adult before doing something is a way of learning what is safe or unsafe. At this stage, it is not a considered decision by children to do something which is not allowed. It will be something which is repeated many times as with all learning. An over-reaction from the adult in these situations can lead children to be fearful of exploration, overwhelmed by the adult's emotion or relieved that they have found a way to gain much-needed adult attention.

Positive relationships depend on positive feelings and children are just beginning to learn about their own and others' feelings. They do not make the same connections that adults often do between action and feelings. They do not, for instance, think before acting, 'I will make X feel happy/sad/angry if I do...if I do Y' but their actions are part of some highly important learning.

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Reflect and note

Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl (1999) explain that young children behave like scientists. They give several examples of children apparently being 'deliberately perverse', for example.

'A two-year-old doesn't even look at the lamp cord. Instead his hand goes out to touch it as he looks, steadily, gravely, and with great deliberation at you... But this perverse behaviour actually turns out to be quite rational. Two-year-olds have just begun to realise that people have different desires. The grave look is directed at you because you and your reaction, are the really interesting thing. ... The terrible twos reflects a genuine clash between children's need to understand other people and their need to live happily with them... With these two-year-olds, as with scientists, finding the truth is more than a profession – it's a passion.

And of course this passion can overwhelm young children with grief or anger.

Learning about expressing emotions appropriately is one of the most complex aspects of understanding ourselves and maintaining relationships with others.

The fact that cultures and even individual families differ in their standards for the appropriate display and management of emotions makes this task especially challenging for children...'

(Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl, 1999, p.112)²

Implications for practice

- It is very hard for a young child to answer a question about what another child might be thinking or feeling.
- Asking why a child has bitten or hurt someone is unhelpful as it is impossible for the child to answer when overwhelmed by emotions.
- Predicting how others might react is only likely to be based on children's own perspective and limited experience.
- Children need lots of practice hearing about and playing with the idea of someone else thinking different things in different situations.
- In your talk with children you need to open up other people's thinking for them rather than get cross when children get it wrong.

2 Extract from Gopnick, A., Meltzoff, A. and Kuhl, P. (2001) How Babies Think. © Phoenix, Orion Publishing group. Used with kind permission.

Pause for thought

Key person or childminder

Consider the following in relation to your current group of children.

- What discussions have you had with individual mothers, fathers and carers to find out the most effective way, time and place to share information about their children?
- What has been most effective in engaging the fathers of the children in your group?
- What are you going to try next to improve communication with the family of the child you are most concerned about?
- In what ways have you shared your successes in engaging with families to inform changes in setting systems and policies?
- In what ways do you role model that feelings are valuable to inform how we learn about each other?
- How often do you talk to children about their feelings? For example, do you start a conversation with, 'I understand you are feeling angry' rather than, 'Stop shouting at once – that's very annoying for everyone else'?

SENCO/behaviour coordinator

Consider the following and current consistency of effective practice in the setting.

- What system do you have in place in your setting to support the staff team to have brief communication with families on a daily basis?
- What system do you have in place in your setting to follow up daily communication on a weekly or fortnightly basis?
- How do you link the different levels of communication so that mothers, fathers and carers are involved in a coherent longer-term 'conversation' with your setting?
- What systems do you have in place in your setting to arrange for a regular longer, more focused discussion about a child including the child's mother, father or carer and key person?
- What is the balance of successes and challenges in the reasons for planning these discussions?

Leaders and managers

Identify your current priorities for increasing the engagement of families in the setting.

- In what ways do you ensure that fathers are included in all communications from your setting?
- In what ways are you able to help the staff team be flexible in the ways they communicate with mothers, fathers and carers?
- In what ways do you acknowledge the way in which the staff team builds positive relationships with mothers, fathers and carers?
- In what ways do you involve parents in developing and implementing your setting approach to helping children learn about each other's feelings, behaviour and conflict resolution?
- In what ways do you make sure that all staff are clear about the progression of learning about behaviour and conflict resolution which children experience in your setting? (This progression of learning will be from being babies to toddlers, toddler to pre-school, pre-school to Reception Year.)

Enabling Environments

EYFS Principle

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

Commitments

3.1 Observation, Assessment and Planning: Babies and children are individuals first, each with a unique profile of abilities. Schedules and routines should flow with the child's needs. All planning starts with observing children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.

3.2 Supporting Every Child: the environment supports every child's learning through planned experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable.

3.3 The Learning Environment: A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces.

3.4 The Wider Context: Working in partnership with other settings, other professionals and with individuals and groups in the community supports children's development and progress towards the outcomes of Every Child Matters: being healthy, staying, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.

Ways in which these commitments can be seen in effective practice relating to behaviour, emotional and social development are explored throughout this section.

Developmental information

We now understand that growing up with a balance of experiences, which involves accessing learning equally indoors and outdoors, provides the best recipe for emotional well-being and mental health.

- Many children currently have an excess of indoor experience and limited outdoor learning.
- Regular and sustained time outdoors will usually impact on behaviour through reducing anxiety levels, increasing collaboration and calming high emotions.
- The emotional environment of a setting is the constant between indoors and outdoors. Practitioners provide the security of positive adult support and interactions which are in tune with the child's current emotions in both places.

Taking risks

The opportunities for learning about ourselves and our physical environment are endless. A crucial life skill for us all is to find out how to respond to risk, assess what is reasonable to attempt and what is not. To provide children with an environment which is designed to offer no risk is to deprive them of the opportunity to learn how to deal with risk. It can also give the message that the world is a very scary place and increase anxiety to a level where children are frightened to explore at all. With appropriate adult risk assessment it is possible to help children effectively to learn about their own abilities and to deal with appropriate risks and challenges.

Developmentally, for example, at 12–18 months children are beginning to learn about moving around independently and walking. They also learn about falling over, climbing a little higher, reaching a little further, pushing something a little bigger, pulling something a little heavier. Through these experiences children can begin to understand the feeling of when they are close to their limits. Children who have no opportunity for such learning about themselves at this stage can find it difficult to understand or recognise situations which are beyond their limits or inherently dangerous.

Reflect and note

The relationships between what we think, what we know and what we experience are complex. Children's awareness of the feelings and thoughts of others is built on their awareness of how their own minds and bodies work. Children's learning is very fast. As Gopnik (2009, p.157) reminds us:

'Babies and young children learn so much so quickly that their entire stock of knowledge turns over every few months.... In developmental psychology we talk breezily about the big differences between nine-month-olds' and twelve-month-olds' conceptions of objects or three-year-olds and four-year-olds' understanding of minds. But what this means is that in just a few months, these children have completely changed their minds about what the world is like. Imagine that your world-view in September was totally different from what it was in June, and then completely changed again by Christmas. Or imagine that your most basic beliefs would be entirely transformed between 2009 and 2010 and then again by 2012. Really flexible and innovative adults might change their minds this way two or three times in a lifetime.'³

Learning about relationships and interactions with others involves trying things out, getting it wrong, repeating reactions to confirm responses and learning about how different emotions affect us.

All children in a setting are learning about behaviour and it is wrong to focus only on those whose behaviour is a cause for concern.

'...approaches that involve all children in a setting work simultaneously on eliminating disruptive child behaviours and developing prosocial behaviours, and give serious attention to creating early environments that reduce barriers to positive peer interactions will avoid stigmatizing some children... and have reasonably good odds of success.' (Shonkoff, Jack and Phillips, 2000, p.181)⁴

From birth to five years, in particular, children are trying to make sense of relationships both with adults and other children. The emotional environment of the setting and home are the main influences at this stage. Children who are experiencing behavioural, emotional or social difficulties are often more sensitive to the emotional environment of a setting. Changes in staffing, routines and quality of interactions will be likely to result in more intense responses from children who are struggling with this area of development.

All children, but particularly those who are struggling, may be confused by mixed messages from adults. Here are some examples.

- One day adults smile and laugh when children spill a drink over themselves. The next day, when they spill a drink, the children are shouted at and told off.
- They are told not to play with the bikes because they hit someone but another child is allowed to continue after doing the same thing.
- One adult praises them for trying hard to sit with others at story time, another adult lists the things they have done wrong and need to improve.
- One adult talks to them about being 'good' and praise seems random, another adult identifies one behaviour to praise consistently.
- Adults only respond to inappropriate behaviour once it escalates to a loud and dangerous level.

Children often learn responses we did not intend to teach, for example:

- You get more attention if you behave inappropriately.
- You get what you want if you are bigger or louder than others.
- Sharing is about giving something away that you are playing with.
- Adults are always on someone else's side when things go wrong.

³ Extract from Gopnick, A. (2009) *The Philosophical Baby*. © The Random House Group Limited. Used with kind permission.

⁴ Reprinted with permission from Shonkoff, Jack, P. & Phillips, Deborah A. From *Neurons to Neighbourhoods*, (2000) (c) by the National Academy of Sciences, Courtesy of the National Academies Press, Washington, D.C. Used with kind permission.

- Adults are there to tell you off and stop you doing things.
- You can hurt people and take things so long as you say sorry afterwards.

As part of the process of reviewing practice in the setting it is important to listen to what children are communicating about their everyday experience through their behaviour. Using observation and discussion with families to tune into individual children's patterns of response helps to work out what they currently understand about behaviour, emotions and social interactions.

Children may be working to some general principles. Here are some examples.

- Everyone is trying to be unkind to me.
- No one listens to me.
- No one knows what I need.
- No one notices when I am sad or anxious.
- Adults only comfort or cuddle me when they need to, not when I need it.
- New things are very hard and I can't do them.
- I am not good at anything and no one chooses to be with me.

Where life experiences to date have led children to understand that this is how the world is for them, changing this view takes time and is hard work. The importance of adults working together to support the child cannot be over emphasised.

The audit in the SEAD booklet (DCSF 00707-2008BKT-EN, p.53) will support settings to review in detail the emotional environment of the setting.

Increased levels of emotional well-being, engagement and involvement will have a positive impact on both behaviour and learning for all children and adults.

A practitioner asks

I have planned the way my room is organised and once the children are used to it they learn how to do things the way I like. By the end of the year they are independent and ready for the next class. Why should I change what I have been doing if it has been so successful?

The Enabling Environments section of the e-learning module also explores issues related to this question.

Even with two or three years' experience of working with children you will be very aware of how different they are as individuals compared with how they are as a group. During the EYFS children are developing very rapidly and usually with great enthusiasm. To support and extend the learning of each new group of children the environment will have to be responsive to their interests and developmental needs. Obvious differences like the relative numbers of girls and boys or average age of the children can make significant differences in their social connections and levels of physical activity. This applies to any size of group – whether it is three children in a childminder's home, 20 children in a pre-school group or 30 children in a Reception Year class.

Each group of children you work with will have different characteristics and will respond differently to systems, routines and the organisation of your setting. The first priority is getting to know your current cohort of children. With colleagues you can reflect on these questions.

- What are the priorities for the children at this stage of the year?
- In what ways should you adapt the current routines and systems to support them more effectively?
- What can mothers, fathers and carers tell us about what is most effective for their children?
- In what ways can we explore children's feelings about the way we organise things?

Consider these points, for example.

- Do adult routines interrupt play?
- Is there free flow to the outside?
- Is there time for children to involve their mothers, fathers and carers in activities or show them things they have been involved in?
- How do you organise snack time? In what ways does it support involvement in activities and social connections between children?
- How do you prepare children to finish using equipment?
- How do you save models, piece of work, paintings, etc.?
- Is the child able to decide which examples of work are included in records and which are taken home?
- What happens if a child wants a piece of work to be included in records and taken home?
- In what ways are children able to use cameras to communicate to you things they like or don't like about your setting?

In terms of behaviour and social connections there are roughly three phases in a year for a group or class of children (Rogers, 2008, p.46).

The establishment phase is approximately the first three months of being in the group and involves:

- finding out about each other
- making friendship connections
- learning how things work in the room
- establishing boundaries.

The consolidation phase is approximately the second three months of being in the group, when children are:

- finding things more predictable and familiar
- feeling more confident
- testing out boundaries.

The transitions phase is approximately the final three months of being in the group and involves:

- mixed feelings about moving on
- wanting to stay with the familiar.

Times of transition, particularly where we are moving from dealing with one group of people to a new set, usually cause increased levels of anxiety. This anxiety can be expressed in different ways. Adults and children can both be uncharacteristically:

- more tired than usual
- tearful
- less tolerant
- withdrawn
- aggressive
- unrealistically confident, to hide anxiety
- controlling.

Implications for practice

- Children who show noisy and exuberant behaviour indoors will often respond particularly well to regular active outdoor time once they get used to the new experiences.
- As with indoor learning, observation, assessment and planning will enable you to follow the children's interests to involve them in purposeful learning outdoors too.
- Regular routines and certain times of day, for example meal times, may trigger an increase in anxiety for adults and children, and children's behaviour may be adversely affected.
- Adult responses to new situations will communicate to children whether they are likely to be fun or not.
- Routines can be obvious to adults but often mysterious to children. For example, 'tidy up time' becomes impossible if children cannot reach or find the correct storage space.

Some routines are more important to children than others, particularly those which are emotionally nurturing, or related to attachment and individual relationships, such as nappy changing and eating. Introducing or changing routines involves children learning something new. As with all learning some children will pick up what adults intend very quickly at the first explanation, others will take longer. Some children will need adults to make the learning more accessible, for example through:

- opportunities to try out, practise or rehearse the new routine on their own
- visual prompts of the sequence of routines using photos or signs
- having specific prompts and supportive reminders
- working in a smaller group of children
- being allowed more time to secure the learning
- getting agreed consistent responses from all adults.

Children are involved in behavioural, emotional and social learning every minute of every day. There are some ways in which settings can provide specific activities for children to explore responses with an opportunity for reflection. Practitioners might do the following.

- Engage children in talking about why a particular group activity or interaction went well. The reasons might be:
 - inviting others to join in
 - considering what sorts of words were used
 - deciding how turns were organised
 - agreeing rules
 - problem solving when rules were broken
 - dealing with winning and losing appropriately even when feelings were strong.
- Use puppets to explore a simple scenario.
 - Alesha and Reo are in the park, Alesha buys Reo an ice cream. How will he feel?
 - Joshua and Alex both want the red bike at the same time. How many different ways can we find for them to sort it out?
- Use photographs to reflect on times when children's facial expressions suggested they were happy, engaged and involved in an activity. Ask what words they would use to describe how they felt.
- Use photographs in a game situation for children to try to guess how others might be feeling.
- Use story books to explore how characters may be feeling and different ways they could express those feelings.

- Ask:
 - If someone is sad, what might change that feeling?
 - What are the ways we describe the emotions between happy and sad?
 - When do we feel happy, sad or angry?
 - When do we feel a bit sad and a bit happy?
- Use superhero play to explore appropriate ways to express anger, disappointment, excitement or distress.

When children are contributing to discussions about feelings and emotions it is important to ensure that the adult's response respects and values what the child has said. Characters in stories may have a smiling face but the child may identify that less obvious feelings are present. Capturing a wide variety of suggestions will provoke more thinking than pretending there is one right answer.

All of these suggestions offer an opportunity for children to think about emotions and responses without trying to deal with the influence of those emotions at the same time.

Translating the thinking from these activities into real life involves more new learning. The role of the adult includes:

- reframing what children have said – 'I hate you!' is more likely to be communicating, 'I really want to play with that bike now!' than an intense dislike of an individual;
- mediating between children and others around them – opening up the idea that other children are thinking something different is a crucial part of learning at this stage of development;
- mediating between children and other adults – what might the reason be for an adult to have said no to playing in the water?;
- mediating between children and their environment – supporting to try new things, reflecting on success, assessing risk and dealing with risk.

Physical contact

In reviewing current practice in the setting related to children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, the ethos of the setting and attitudes of staff can be strongly challenged. One particular aspect which needs exploration is the physical contact with children in response to their behaviour. When working with young children it can be tempting to respond to difficult behaviour by picking a child up to remove them from a situation or physically stopping the child from doing something. The use of such physical interventions needs to be carefully considered.

The Statutory Framework for the EYFS sets out the specific legal requirements in relation to EYFS and provides the following guidance:

'Physical intervention should only be used to manage a child's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult, to prevent serious damage to property or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. Any occasion where physical intervention is used to manage a child's behaviour should be recorded and parents should be informed about it on the same day.

Except in childminding settings, a named practitioner should be responsible for behaviour management issues. They should be supported in acquiring the skills to provide guidance to other staff and to access expert advice if ordinary methods are not effective with a particular child.' (Statutory Framework for the EYFS, p.28)

The *Use of force guidance* (DCSF, 2007) further explains:

'There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force. That will always depend on the precise circumstances of individual cases. To be judged lawful, the force used would need to be

in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent. The degree of force used should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result. Use of force could not be justified to prevent trivial misbehaviour.'

More importantly, the guidance emphasises consideration of ways to minimise the need to use force, for example:

- creating a calm environment that minimises the risk of incidents that might require using force arising;
- using SEAL and SEAD approaches to teach children how to manage conflict and strong feelings;
- de-escalating incidents if they do arise;
- only using force when the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force;
- using risk assessments and individual plans for individual children, which should include details of how a child would be held if the need arose.

In order for staff to feel confident in their decision making, the setting's policies need to be reviewed regularly and there needs to be detailed discussion of how policy translates into practice with current children.

Setting policy and practice

If risk assessments suggest there may be a need for physical intervention – other than in a one-off emergency situation – then the following will be necessary.

- Support from the local authority's Early Years team should be sought.
- The child's parents need to be involved in planning for this eventuality.
- The majority of the planning discussion will focus on minimising the need for physical intervention.
- Individual plans will prioritise supporting the child to learn alternative ways to express emotions which will not lead to the need for physical intervention by practitioners.
- Recording procedures and communication with the child's mother, father and carer will be discussed.
- Information about setting approaches to behaviour for all mothers, fathers and carers will be revisited and discussed.
- Responses to all children's behaviour will be reviewed to ensure that every opportunity is taken to de-escalate behaviour rather than to use physical intervention.
- Appropriate staff training needs will be identified and met as a priority.
- The way in which children will be held should be explained in detail. Any physical intervention should be a supportive act of care and control not a punitive action by the adult. For the EYFS age range this should be based on a wrap around 'hug' to help the child feel safe and regain self-control.

In reviewing behaviour policies and practice some key issues need to be considered.

- Are the approaches explained in setting policies and practice consistently applied to an individual child experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and other children?
- Are all staff able to communicate the attitudes expressed in the policies?
- Do all mothers, fathers and carers understand the implications of the policy in relation to their child and the other children in the group?
- Do all staff take responsibility for supporting the child experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties?

Pause for thought

Key person or childminder

Consider your observations and assessments and ask yourself these questions.

- What have you observed and noted about the different activity levels of the children in your group?
- Which children are more relaxed and calm after being outside?
- Which children are more active and unsettled before mealtimes?
- Which children arrive in very different emotional states on different days?
- For which children have you been able to work with families to find accurate ways of describing their emotional states and how to help manage them?
- In what ways does each child express anxiety about transitions?
- What are the most successful ways you have found to support each child to make smooth transitions between activities or home and setting?
- Which children's behaviour gives you most cause for concern at the moment? What have you done about it?
- What does your setting's policy say about supporting children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties? How does this relate to the current group of children?
- If you work with babies, how do you ensure that you pick them up respectfully? For example, is there a rule in your setting about not coming up behind them and lifting them up, or picking them up without making eye contact?
- In what ways is this respectful approach applied to older children, for example when wiping faces or inviting children for nappy changing?
- Under what circumstances would the current staff group feel it was reasonable to intervene physically with any of the older children?

SENCO/behaviour coordinator

Consider to what extent the current routines and organisation affect children's behaviour.

- Which times of day are most difficult for the current groups of children in your setting?
- In what ways do you support the staff team working with children at these times?
- In what ways have you worked with the staff team to review the impact of routines on children's behaviour?
- In what ways have you been able to help engage mothers, fathers and carers in solving concerns about current children's behaviour?
- When was your setting's behaviour policy reviewed in relation to the current group of children?
- To what extent are all staff aware of the implications of the setting's policy regarding physical intervention with children?
- From your experience, which children do you think may continue to have difficulties in learning about managing their behaviour and emotions beyond their time at your setting? What action have you taken?

Leaders and managers

- How do you communicate with families about the way in which the environment you create impacts on children's behaviour?
- In what ways are you planning to increase the access children have to a variety of outdoor spaces?
- In what ways are you planning to change staff deployment to best meet the needs of this cohort of children?
- What will the impact of changing staff deployment be in the short, medium and long term for the children's behavioural, emotional and social learning?
- In what ways do you work with mothers, fathers and carers to think about their children's needs and how to view children's daily, weekly and monthly experience in a range of environments? This range may include local parks, swimming pools, libraries and local events.
- In what ways do you involve mothers, fathers and carers in gathering ideas of things to do in local outdoor spaces? Do you share photos and information about things which have been particularly successful with the current group of children?
- In what ways do you engage with mothers, fathers and carers to explore setting policies which relate to behavioural learning?
- What have you identified as priorities for staff training in relation to children's behavioural, emotional and social learning?
- In what ways have you shared with staff and mothers, fathers and carers your understanding of the circumstances in which you would consider it reasonable for staff to intervene physically with a child?
- What procedures do you have in place to record if a child is restrained by being held?

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Learning and Development

EYFS Principle

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

Commitments

4.1 Play and Exploration: Children's play reflects their wide-ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.

4.2 Active Learning: Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.

4.3 Creativity and Critical Thinking: When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a wide variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.

4.4 Areas of Learning and Development: The EYFS is made up of six Areas of Learning and Development. All Areas of Learning and Development are underpinned by the Principles of the EYFS.

Ways in which these commitments can be seen in effective practice relating to behaviour, emotional and social development are explored throughout this section. Consideration is also given to how children learn about behaviour through all six Areas of Learning and Development.

Developmental information

Practitioners are used to applying the Principle and commitments listed above to Communication, language and literacy, Knowledge and understanding of the world, Creative development, Physical development and Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy.

Personal, social and emotional development is often more challenging. Sometimes this is because practitioners believe that:

- this kind of learning is something children should know anyway.
- mothers, fathers and carers should make sure that children know how to behave with other children.
- if children have been told they should be able to respond appropriately.
- if children can tell you what they should do they should be able to do it.
- if all the other children in this age group can behave appropriately then all children should be able to.

Consider how inappropriate these bullet points would seem if applied to any other area of learning.

The majority of children's behavioural, emotional and social difficulties which practitioners deal with will be of a temporary nature and developmentally appropriate. In a minority of situations the behavioural, emotional and social difficulties will be longer term in nature or an indication of more complex needs. Practitioners should be clear about local authority support and access points for SEN and specialist support teams who can offer advice and joint working.

All Early Years providers must by law deliver the Learning and Development requirements of the EYFS. Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are likely to impact on all six Areas of Learning and Development in the EYFS. Every area is an opportunity for children to learn about themselves and relate to others. Children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties will find the emotional and social element of any activity very challenging. They will need practitioners' understanding, consideration and professional help to be able to access all areas of learning.

Local support teams such as Early Years consultants, behaviour support teams, health visitors or social care teams may also be able to help and support both you and the family of children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. These professionals will support you to provide suitable experiences and activities for these children in the context of a high-quality inclusive EYFS environment. All staff need to be involved in reflecting on their practice and finding more effective ways to include children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

A practitioner asks

I believe that children should learn to do as they are told and should show respect to all adults. Surely all children must follow the rules otherwise it is unfair and other children will learn bad behaviour?

The Learning and Development section of the e-learning module also explores issues related to this question.

Adults' individual views, beliefs and values make a difference to how they interpret children's behaviour. Unless all practitioners are clear about the views, beliefs and values which underpin professional behaviour in the setting, different staff will give different messages to children and other adults. This will be very confusing for a young child who is trying to make sense of how the social world works.

The diversity of the workforce and the families involved in settings means that there will be a range of ideas about what is socially appropriate. These perspectives have grown up over time and are influenced by geography, religious faith, social priorities, economics and life events. Each individual is strongly influenced by these factors but we seldom take time to reflect or share how they inform our behaviour. They also inform judgements about others. A simple example would be where an adult understands that respect is demonstrated by children lowering their eyes to look towards the floor but some children's experience tells them that in this situation they must look directly at the adult to show they are listening.

Professionally understanding how children learn about behaviour, and that it is a way of communicating means thinking about the world from the child's perspective.

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Research has begun to identify both risk and protective factors which are likely to influence children's sense of well-being and security. For example, babies are at an advantage if the adults around them:

- love and care for them.
- are keen to listen to their communication about when they are hungry, tired or need a nappy changing.
- are at ease themselves.
- are physically healthy.
- have a consistent good sense of well-being.
- are confident and relaxed most of the time in the role of parent.
- have the support and encouragement of other adults who care about them.
- have access to appropriate medical advice and support.
- have sufficient space and adequate material resources.
- have adequate financial resources.

Very few of us are able to provide these things at the levels and with the consistency over time that we would like for children.

People behave in different ways for several reasons.

- We learn about how the world works initially from the adults in our family and those we spend time with in our earliest years.
- As babies we are trying to make sense of our immediate environment and piece together how key people relate to us and how we should relate to them.
- These experiences can vary dramatically for each child even from the same family, for many reasons.

During children's early development they may well demonstrate behaviours which for a much older child would be considered inappropriate behaviour. Here are some examples.

- A child throws a toy at an adult.
- A child hits a child playing nearby.
- A child screams, cries, shouts and hits out when the child does not get his or her own way.

It is highly likely that we would see children in any of the EYFS age bands react in similar ways at some time. This would not directly lead us to consider that these children would benefit from significant additional support, a diagnosis or identification of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is the frequency, intensity, severity and long-term nature of such behaviours which would make these children stand out as unusual in our professional view of children's development.

Implications for practice

Practitioners often report that the children who display behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are the ones they worry about most. They are also the ones who feel the most challenging to include in the daily life of the setting. The following bullet points highlight the building blocks of effective practice for all children, but especially children displaying behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

The IDP is based on the idea of Quality First teaching (high-quality responsive provision for all children) rather than specialist provision. However, it is recognised that children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties may need more intensive input in some circumstances, but most should make good progress with the support which can be offered in an effective setting.

Both individual practitioners and whole-staff groups are able to increase the extent to which children

develop a positive understanding of how they relate to others around them. Here are some examples of how this is achieved.

- Practitioners get to know individual children and their families in sufficient depth to be able to understand how these individual children are using their behaviour to communicate their understanding of the world.

To further develop practice, review:

- initial information about your setting currently given to mothers, fathers and carers, particularly concerning behaviour as a means of communication;
 - admission systems and procedures with current families, specifically focusing on what they have understood from your information about behaviour.
- Joint problem-solving discussions with families and colleagues, including the SENCO or Behaviour coordinator and leaders and managers, enable everyone to be part of the solution and to want it to succeed.

To further develop practice:

- identify which discussions about behaviour have been particularly effective with your current group of families. Although there will be consistency in your messages, this is a way of working which needs to be developed with each family individually;
 - focus on one issue about behaviour as a staff or room team to explore a variety of ways to improve things. Individual members of staff will have different ideas – agree one to implement and make a time to evaluate how successful it has been.
- Identifying progress in behavioural, emotional social development can be a complex process taking a longer time than you would like.

To further develop practice, identify:

- the ways in which you share children's progress with mothers, fathers and carers. All children make progress, albeit sometimes in small steps, if we are offering them appropriate experiences and adult interaction;
 - the ways in which you share your understanding of children's positive behavioural progress with your colleagues, especially for children whose behaviour you find challenging.
- Understanding the influences of your own views, beliefs and values on your judgements about children's behaviour is most effectively explored in discussion with others.

To further develop practice:

- identify opportunities to explore with mothers, fathers and carers individually or in groups what some of the behavioural misunderstandings in your setting might be;
- discuss with colleagues what you learned as a child, for example about showing respect to adults in authority, behaviour at mealtimes, going to visit extended family and showing emotions;
- share with colleagues how you celebrate happy memorable celebrations such as birth, marriage, birthdays and festivals.

Personal, social and emotional development

This is the most obvious area of difficulty and children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties will need specific help to learn about interacting with others. They are likely to find it particularly difficult to recognise and respond appropriately to their own and others' emotions. This will mean that you will need to plan carefully for group activities, sharing and turn-taking situations to ensure that individual children have the best possible chance of success.

During their time in the EYFS children will be trying to understand about what is right and wrong. They will rely on the reactions of others to help them. There are some obvious examples of behaviours which are unacceptable, such as hurting others, when clear and consistent messages from adults are important. Other situations can be more complex for children to develop a working knowledge of, for example:

- accepting others' views even if they don't agree with them;
- where rules at home and setting are not the same – for example a child is told, 'You can walk around while you eat your snack', but also, 'You sit when you are eating or drinking';
- where others seem to be able to do something but a particular child is not allowed, for example where older children are able to use specific pieces of equipment independently or access different spaces.

Rules are more effective if they are devised in a positive frame so they tell us what we should be doing, not giving a list of things we are not allowed to do. Children should be involved in agreeing or amending rules whenever possible and given opportunity to talk about how rules apply to certain situations. Collecting examples of times when rules were helpful encourages children to understand their purpose.

Communication, language and literacy

Communication is a social process and involves giving and receiving messages, but one party also needs some understanding of the other person to be successful. All children in the EYFS are in the process of developing their use and understanding of language and communication. It is likely that children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties will experience more frustration in their learning about communication. This frustration may well be expressed in an aggressive way.

Learning about themselves and others through communication, language and literacy involves children:

- identifying ways to make contact with others, exploring touch, vocal features, being close and facial expressions.
- finding different ways of inviting others to play, including verbal invitation and making a selection using photographs.
- finding ways to ask for help and to say no.
- identifying things which they say and do which make people feel happy, sad or angry.
- saying things which change how people feel, for example sad to happy or happy to sad.
- hearing a sensitive adult interpretation of what others may be thinking.
- identifying things people say which make them feel happy, sad or angry.
- finding pictures or words they can use to tell others how they feel.
- identifying words which fit between happy and sad, sad and angry, happy and angry – mixed feeling words.
- expressing their own feeling words or sounds – helping others to know what it feels like for them.
- hearing, telling and acting out stories based on feelings and what happens to them and others.

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

There is no particular reason for this area of learning to be more difficult than others. It may be a strength, where children work independently, as the activity may rely less on social and emotional understanding. Group activities are likely to be more difficult because of the social demands and anxieties which children may feel. Where children experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties there are likely to be related problems with confidence and self-esteem which will affect approaches to new learning.

Learning about themselves and others through problem solving, reasoning and numeracy involves children:

- working out things together, contributing ideas and accepting others' ideas.
- thinking together and adding to others ideas.
- giving and receiving.
- cooking for their friends.
- identifying things they would like a friend to make for them.
- using sandtimers to help with turn taking.
- sharing 'fairly', making sure each person gets a share.
- dealing with competition and being better at some things, as well as appreciating others being better than them, being first, second, last, or throwing the furthest, the shortest distance, etc.
- remembering and adhering to simple rules of games.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Activities which need children to appreciate another's view or opinion, such as learning about the culture and beliefs of others, may well be more difficult for children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Group activities can be more challenging because of the social demands and anxieties children may feel. There are likely to be related problems with confidence and self-esteem which will affect approaches to new learning.

Learning about themselves and others through knowledge and understanding of the world includes:

- identifying places they like to be
- finding things they are interested in and like to share with others
- finding things others are interested in and like to share with them
- asking questions of others
- responding to others' questions
- suggesting new ways of combining equipment, for example combining modelling dough and construction in a game
- accepting others' suggestions of new ways of combining equipment, for example combining water, sand and play people in a game.

Physical development

It is important that children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are encouraged to be physically active as this can help them to calm and channel the use of energy in a positive way. As with other areas of learning the social demands of group activities, including following rules, are likely to be more difficult. Levels of confidence, self-esteem and anxiety will affect approaches to new skills and competitiveness.

Learning about themselves and others through physical development involves children identifying:

- activities which change the way they feel – being outside, climbing, running or sitting still.
- things they like to do on their own.
- things they like to do with one other person.
- things they like to do with others.

- what they can do now which they couldn't do when they were younger.
- what they can do now which was really hard to learn.
- their current limits and ways to extend them.

Creative development

Individual children may find specific aspects of creative development absorbing and satisfying and it will be important to ensure that children have a range of experiences to increase the likelihood of finding their own preference. Some children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties will experience high levels of frustration and distress if they feel their models, paintings, etc. are not as good as other children's. At times this frustration and related confidence and self-esteem difficulties may lead to children destroying their own or the work of others. Collaborative and group activities are likely to present particular challenges for children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Learning about themselves and others through creative activities includes children identifying:

- activities which change the way they feel – for example playing with clay or gloop, or listening to music may help them feel both calm and excited.
- activities which give them personal, imaginative and group space, for example den making.
- different ways to express how they feel at different times.
- things they like to do on their own.
- things they like to do with one other.
- things they like to do with others.
- stories they can tell about all these things.
- activities involving making things for others.
- things they would like others to make for them.

Pause for thought

Key person or childminder

- Identify the variety of ways in which you model inviting children to join an activity. How many of the children in your group can confidently ask another to play?
- In what ways do you show children that you value everyone's comments and suggestions in group activities?
- In what ways do you help children learn positively about winning and losing games?
- Identify the variety of ways in which you model choosing who will be first in a game. Which methods do the children regularly use themselves?
- How do you foster children's imaginative development and their ability to construct stories and narrative based on personal experience?
- How often do you start conversations with, 'I wonder what would happen if...?'
- What do the mothers, fathers and carers of your group currently think about their children's confidence in learning about these skills?
- In what ways do you support practitioners in learning about their own behavioural, emotional and social development?
- In what ways do you challenge negative attitudes towards children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties?

SENCO/behaviour coordinator

- In what ways do you use your setting's induction process to help new practitioners to understand the setting's inclusive approach to children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties?
- In what ways do you regularly share with practitioners and families strategies which have been successful in supporting children's behavioural, emotional and social learning?
- In what ways do you support practitioners in learning about their own behavioural, emotional and social learning?
- In what ways do you encourage all mothers, fathers and carers to celebrate their children's achievements in social learning?
- In what ways do you support practitioners to ensure that all children, especially those experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, are able to access all learning opportunities, including outings and special events?

Leaders and managers

- In what ways do you enable practitioners to share their understanding of the progression (babies to toddlers, toddlers to pre-school, pre-school to Reception Year, Reception Year to Year 1) in behavioural, emotional and social learning as described in the key person bullet points above?
- In what ways do you work jointly with practitioners to develop realistic expectations of individual children's ability to access all areas of learning?
- In what ways do you demonstrate to all mothers, fathers and carers your commitment to their children, including children who are experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties?

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Appendix

Case study

Name: Kyle

Age: 3 years 9 months

Family information: Mum – Tracy, Dad – Aloysius, younger sister (6 months) Alesha

Early Years setting: Childminder

Childminder/key person: Jacki

Key person's view: summary of Jacki's views about Kyle

'Kyle has been with me for three months; I also look after Rachel (3 years) and Tindy (4 years) who have both been with me for a year. Kyle enjoys most activities and will sometimes play with Tindy briefly. However, he finds it difficult to join in play when Rachel and Tindy are playing together and will wander off on his own. Kyle seems happy when he arrives in the morning and quickly finds a favourite toy or activity from the previous day. He smiles and acknowledges Tindy when he arrives but does not do the same for Rachel. Tindy and Rachel like to go outside when they first arrive. Kyle prefers being indoors. Kyle's favourite activities are modelling dough, paint, books, cooking and water play.'

Mother's view: summary of Tracy's views about Kyle

'Kyle is a shy boy and although happy to be around other children does not really join in. He is with his cousins a lot but usually watches rather than joining in their games. Kyle is happy to help look after Alesha but mostly plays on his own at home. Although I would like him to join in more I am glad that he is happy to be with other children and is not badly behaved or aggressive.'

Father's view: summary of Aloysius' views about Kyle

'My son is too quiet, he needs to be a bit rougher and stand up for himself with the other children. He enjoys lots of activities but usually watches others rather than going to join in.'

Taking action, agreeing priorities

Kyle's Mum, Dad and childminder were able to bring their ideas together in a variety of ways, including these.

- Jacki shared with Tracy each day how much Kyle had joined in activities with the other two children.
- Tracy noticed which things he joined in most when his cousins were around.
- Tracy and Aloysius agreed that Kyle was not as keen to join in with other children as they hoped he would be.
- Jacki suggested that they collect some photos of when Kyle was with other children and enjoying what he was doing.

- Jacki thought about each area of learning and ways in which she could encourage Kyle to feel more confident about joining in with the others. She agreed to let Tracy and Aloysius know each week how things were going. If there was something particularly positive she would phone them to give immediate feedback and let Kyle speak to Tracy.

Personal, social and emotional development

- Use photos of Rachel, Tindy and Kyle taken at Jacki's house and at home to talk about what they liked to do together.
- Notice and praise when children let others join their play.
- Encourage children to recognise others' strengths and talents.

Communication, language and literacy

- Collect examples of the language Kyle, Rachel and Tindy used to invite others to join their play or make others feel welcome.
- Use puppets and superhero characters to act out wanting to, and finding, ways to join in.

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

- Find out and represent who children like to play with and which activities they like to do with different children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Ask children:

- Which spaces are best for being together, with one friend and on your own?
- What do you like to have in the space?

Physical development

Ask children:

- What things can we move on our own, with one friend and with two friends?

Creative development

- Explore using different implements to 'paint' using water, paint, mud, cornflour, etc. on a variety of surfaces inside and out.

Progress noted

After one week

- Kyle enjoyed getting praised for joining others' play and letting others join him. Although it was still only happening now and again, Kyle began to tell his Mum and Dad if he had played with Rachel and/or Tindy.

After three weeks

- Tracy and Aloysius began to recognise that Kyle found it easiest to play with other children when the activity was messy and outside. When they passed this on to Jacki she made sure there was a greater variety of things which the children could take out and get messy with.

- Aloysius started taking Kyle to the park to play in the muddy puddles. Other children often wanted to join in and he encouraged Kyle to welcome them to the game.
- Rachel, Tindy and Kyle all discovered new phrases or words they could use to indicate they wanted to play with each other, such as, 'Me too' 'I can' or 'I want'. They also knew one thing that they liked to do on their own.
- Rachel enjoyed welcoming the boys to join a game by saying, 'Your turn' or 'Tindy's/Kyle's turn'.

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Case study

Name: Wayne

Age: 3 years 2 months

Family information: Wayne is the only child of Brian and Talitha. Brian works away from home during the week and is only home at weekends.

Early Years setting: Day nursery. Wayne has been at the nursery for ten months. He moved into Blue Room three months ago.

Key person: Connie

SENCO: Harriet

Key person's view: summary of Connie's views about Wayne

Connie has just started working at the nursery and her view is:

'Wayne is very lively and won't settle to any activity. He wants my attention all the time and will push and hurt other children if I am not with him. He can't share and just pushes others out of the way if he wants something. He likes playing outside best when he can rush around on the bikes and climb on the climbing frame.'

SENCO's view: summary of Harriet's views about Wayne

Harriet has worked in the setting for two years and has been the SENCO for six months.

'Wayne is very unsettled and active in the morning but less so in the afternoons. The other children are worried that he will hurt them so move out of his way. Because the children don't want to be with him he wants a lot of attention from adults, especially Connie.'

Mother's view: summary of Talitha's views about Wayne

'Wayne is always on the go and it is really hard in the flat to keep him quiet; sometimes the neighbours complain when he is noisy. After work when I pick him up from nursery I am tired and have to get his supper and put him to bed. He does not sleep well and often doesn't go to sleep until 10 o'clock but still wakes up about 5:30. I try to get him to play with his toys but he rushes around and throws his toys so I have to take them away from him. Sometimes he gets cross with me and hits and kicks me. Brian says I am too soft with him and it is my fault he hurts people. Connie has suggested I take him to the park but I am worried he will hurt other children and their parents would be cross with me.'

Father's view: summary of Brian's views about Wayne

'Wayne is fine when he is with me, if you mean what you say and are firm with him he behaves well. At the weekends he will sit down and draw when I tell him. Talitha lets him do what he wants which is not good for him, he needs to do as he is told. I think if there was a man at the nursery they would not have a problem with him.'

Taking action, agreeing priorities

Connie talks with Harriet about her key group every week and they identify progress and any concerns. As Wayne's name keeps coming up as a concern they decide to talk about him in the 'SENCO/behaviour coordinator slot' at the fortnightly staff meeting. Harriet helps Connie to think about and note:

- activities which Wayne likes and how long he can sustain interest.
- children he would like to be with.
- occasions when he has been able to be with another child without hurting.
- times of day and routines which are better and those which are most difficult.
- the frequency and extent of hurting incidents.

Harriet spends 15 minutes during the morning in Connie's room and observes Wayne's interactions. Harriet and Connie put together the key bits of information to share at the staff meeting.

Connie noted these points.

- Wayne likes the cars and garage and can consistently manage to play for one minute without hurting.
- He often tries to join Andrew and Malachi when they are playing together but he does this by hitting them so they won't let him play; they push him away and he hits harder until Malachi starts to cry.
- After outside play in the morning he has been able to play for five minutes with two other children if Connie is with them.
- The beginning of the day is always difficult and Wayne often rushes into the room and knocks things off surfaces or pushes everyone out of the way. Talitha leaves as quickly as she can.
- There have been 15 incidents of Wayne hurting other children over the past week.

Harriet observed these points.

- Wayne frequently (for example, three times in 15 minutes) goes to look out of the window at the children playing outside downstairs.
- He splashed in the water tray both times he rushed passed.
- He approaches older bigger boys to play with rather than those his age.

When Harriet came into the room after lunch to get something she also noticed that Wayne was sitting with Connie and two other children on the cushions in the story corner. They were all cuddled together and sharing a book.

During the discussion at the staff meeting the following priorities were agreed.

- Arrange a time to talk to Talitha and Brian about Wayne's progress.
- Review and re-circulate the information for parents about the setting's positive approaches to children's learning about behaviour. Staff will include a note to say they are working on helping all children to find successful ways to join others' play. All staff will talk to mothers, fathers and carers about the ways their children are currently asking to join others' play and find out if these are the same ways the children use at home.
- On one day during the week Blue Room will have the first use of the outside area so children can go straight out when they arrive. Connie and the room team will observe how this influences the children's emotions and behaviour, especially Wayne's.
- Connie will use photos of the children in Blue Room playing together to talk about at small-group times.
- All adults will notice and praise all children for letting others play and join in their activities.
- Connie will use the cars and garage to invite Wayne, Andrew and Malachi to play together for two minutes and will give a running commentary of their play.

Harriet spoke to Talitha about finding a time to meet to talk with her and Brian about Wayne's progress. Talitha said she could not get time off work and that the end of the day was not good because she was tired and in a hurry to get home and Brian was away all week so could not come. Harriet suggested that she would get some sandwiches for them to have while they talked so that Talitha did not have to make

a meal when she got home. She agreed to arrange for one of the room team to look after Wayne and that they would talk in the manager's office where they could sit comfortably. Harriet suggested that Talitha choose which day the following week would be most convenient.

Harriet and Connie noted the impact of the suggestions from the staff meeting and prioritised what they wanted to say to Talitha. They agreed that these were the key points.

- Wayne is a happy and very active boy who is beginning to learn about making connections with other children.
- At the nursery they had noticed that he:
 - currently made connections by hitting;
 - was able to spend twice as much time successfully with other children after he had been outside.
- They would like to try increasing the time outside for Wayne and would like Connie to help him play one short activity, lasting not more than three minutes, with another child.

Talitha arrived for the meeting and seemed anxious and not keen to stay. Harriet made her a cup of tea and talked about how she had noticed how Wayne liked the water and how Connie had said he was beginning to pour water from one container into another. Talitha looked relieved and said she was so pleased to hear something good about Wayne as she thought they were just going to tell her he was awful and could not keep his place. Harriet explained that they really liked Wayne and were keen to think of ways to help him but needed Talitha to tell them her ideas too so that they had the best chance of making things work for him. Talitha smiled and relaxed a bit.

Connie and Harriet went through their suggestions and when they were talking about making sure Wayne had more time outside Talitha explained how worried she was about taking Wayne to the park but said that he was fine when he went with Brian.

Connie explained that they were going to try changing the group time outside to become first thing in the morning to see if it had a positive impact on the children's behaviour. When she heard about Talitha's difficulty with taking Wayne to the park and keeping him quiet during the evening she suggested they might try to arrange for him to have some more time outside at the end of the day. She also suggested that he might be okay with Brian because he didn't see so much of him now Brian was working away from home during the week. Talitha said she was worried that Wayne was bored with her when she took him to the park.

When Connie and Harriet talked about the things they had noticed about Wayne's interest in water and him responding well to praise, Talitha said she had been thinking about taking him to the swimming pool. Connie said that several of the children went swimming during the week. She said she would take some photographs of the local pool so that she could talk to her group about what they did there. She and Talitha agreed they would talk about the swimming sessions so both could praise Wayne. Harriet explained that they hoped the combination of more outside or physical activity and support to play with other children would reduce the number of hurting incidents during the week.

At the end of the discussion Harriet suggested they phone Brian to tell him what they had talked about and agreed. She put the call on speaker phone so they could all share their views.

Brian said he was glad to hear there was some good news and he thought the swimming session was a really good idea. He also said he was surprised to get the phone call but was glad to be part of the discussion.

All the adults agreed they would talk again about Wayne's progress in six weeks' time although Talitha and Connie would keep each other up to date on the morning after swimming each week.

Personal, social and emotional development

- Praise Wayne when he is close to other children and being gentle.
- Connie will use the cars and garage to invite Wayne, Andrew and Malachi to play together for two minutes and will give a running commentary on their play.

Communication, language and literacy

- Use an outside water activity to encourage Wayne to play alongside another child. Record this using photographs and describe it as a story at group time.

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

- Increase the variety of containers available for water-pouring activities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- Plan an outing to the local park to explore puddles.

Physical development

- Talitha will give feedback to Connie about the swimming pool sessions, including Wayne's developing skills in dressing and undressing.

Creative development

- Increase the opportunities for creative play in the outside space.

Progress noted

After two weeks

- After the first few days of children getting used to the change in routine, the morning use of outdoor space provided a calmer start to the day for the majority of them. Reviewing the learning opportunities on offer and adding a story den helped some children with the transition from home to setting. Parents commented on the change positively until the first wet, cold day. The staff talked with all parents about how the children used the outdoor space on a wet day and took photographs to show the learning they had observed. Following this the staff reviewed the access to outdoors for all groups.
 1. They agreed a short-term plan which increased the outdoor time for all groups.
 2. They agreed a medium-term plan which focused on changing how the rooms were organised so that some groups were able to have free flow between indoors and outdoors.
 3. They agreed a long-term plan to find out about using other local outdoor spaces within walking distance, such as parks, play space at a children's centre, space at local school nurseries and the wild area around the local Scout hut.
- The first week of Wayne going swimming went well but he was very tired and grumpy the following day and hit several children. Talitha and Connie were disappointed but decided to keep trying.
- Other than the day after swimming Wayne was able to spend two minutes consistently playing with two other children and Connie on three occasions through the day.
- Hurting incidents – week 1: 16 incidents, week 2: 15 incidents.

After five weeks

- The swimming sessions were now a regular event in the week. Wayne used the photos Connie had taken to talk about his visit to the pool. Talitha reported the evening after swimming was much calmer and Wayne was now sleeping better than before, although still waking up about 5:30am.
- Talitha reported that she was going to try going to the park on the way home from nursery one evening. Andrew's Mum had said she would go with her because she knew Andrew and Wayne played sometimes.
- Brian noticed that when he went to the park Wayne would play alongside other children rather than run at them as he had tried to before.
- Connie observed that Wayne had asked Andrew and Malachi if he could join their play on two occasions by saying, 'Play'.
- Hurting incidents – week 3: 10 incidents, week 4: six incidents, week 5: eight incidents.

Name: Ezra

Age: 3 years 11 months

Family information: Ezra is the third child of Prima and Joshua. Ezra has been at nursery for six months. This is her second nursery. She was moved to this one because it is closer to the railway station so easier for Prima to drop her off when she goes to work. Ezra has two older brothers, Jamie (7 years) and Andre (8 years).

Early Years setting: Day nursery

Key person: Mary

SENCO: Jamila

Key person's view: summary of Mary's view about Ezra

Mary describes Ezra as very active, wanting to be the centre of everything and reluctant to share equipment or activities with certain other children. She hits out at other children if they have something she wants and will scream and lash out if she does not get her own way. When an adult challenges her she cries loudly and shouts, 'Ow, ow, you're hurting me!' Mary and the other room staff are fed up and can't find a response which helps Ezra to interact more successfully with other children. When Mary talks to Prima about it Prima just smiles and says Ezra will grow out of it soon.

SENCO's view: summary of Jamila's views about Ezra

Jamila has heard Mary and her colleagues talk about how difficult they find Ezra. On a couple of occasions Jamila has taken Ezra out of the room to give them all a break. Ezra responds very well to this and really enjoys the one-to-one time with Jamila. Mary has said that she thinks Ezra is being rewarded for her difficult behaviour and that it is not good to take her out of the room. Jamila decides it is time for her to talk with the room team to see if they can find a way to help Ezra.

Mother's view: summary of Prima's views about Ezra

Prima says Ezra is very young still and has plenty of time to learn about getting on with other children. She is a strong-willed child and is happy so long as she gets her own way.

Father's view: summary of Joshua's views about Ezra

Joshua says Ezra is doing very well and is much less trouble than the boys were when they were little.

Taking action, agreeing priorities

The meeting between the SENCO and room team concluded with these points.

- All staff agree that Ezra's behaviour is not improving and they have tried all the usual strategies.
- Jamila suggests that she work in the room for a week to try to help identify what they should do next. In order for this to happen one of the team will have to take Jamila's place in the toddler room.
- The staff make a list of all the positive things they know about Ezra.
 - Ezra likes adult company and talks confidently with an adult about things she is doing or likes and about things other children should not be doing.
 - She spends a lot of time involved in creative activities, especially dressing up, and often takes a leading role in pretend play.
 - She likes to be first at any new activity and to show others what they need to do.
- During the discussion the practitioners noted these points.
 - Ezra gets cross and frustrated if she can't immediately do something.
 - Observation notes show that there has been a steady increase in the number of incidents. There is currently an average of seven incidents per week lasting approximately five minutes, involving a screaming and hitting response to an adult saying Ezra is not allowed to do something. The notes show that there are a minimum of 20 incidents per week of Ezra hurting other children. Most incidents happen in the morning but there are some in the afternoon too. Incidents are evenly spread between indoors and outdoors.
 - Mary had more success in de-escalating Ezra's behaviour than other members of the team.

Taking action, agreeing priorities

The agreed priorities were:

- to arrange a time for Mary and Jamila to talk with Prima and Joshua about Ezra's progress.
- to arrange for Jamila and one of the room team to swap places the week after next.
- for all staff to focus on praising all children, especially Ezra, when they play appropriately with other children or respond positively to adult requests.
- for Mary to be with Ezra for 10 minutes each morning involved in a creative activity.

Jamila invites Prima and Joshua to meet her and Mary to discuss Ezra's progress. Prima agrees but a week goes by without agreement of a suitable day or time. There is an open day at the nursery on a Saturday in two weeks' time with activities for the children. Jamila suggests that Prima and Joshua come along and they take some time to talk together. Prima agrees but says Joshua will have to look after the boys. Jamila reluctantly agrees but suggests that Joshua may want to come later in the day to see some of the activities Ezra has been involved in at nursery.

After Jamila has spent the week working alongside Mary they review their observations and agree on these points.

- Ezra seems more relaxed when joining girls' play rather than activities which include boys.
- She is more likely to get frustrated if Michael is in the group.
- She is least likely to get frustrated if there is a maximum of four children in the group and Mary is working with them.
- Suggesting to Ezra to alternate an inside and an outside activity seems to stop frustration building up through the morning.

- Praise from both Mary and Jamila gets a positive response from Ezra but praise from other adults can result in a deterioration in her behaviour.

Jamila and Mary agree the following priorities for the meeting.

- To ask about the creative activities Ezra enjoys at home.
- To share that Ezra has responded well to having some time with Mary – the difficult incidents have not reduced overall but Ezra has seemed more relaxed.
- To invite Prima to talk about how Ezra interacts with adults and children at home as she seems to prefer adult company at nursery.
- To ask how Ezra expresses her frustration when things do not go well when she is with her brothers.
- To find out how Prima and Joshua respond when Ezra screams and hits out after being told she cannot do something.

Prima arrives 20 minutes later than arranged. Jamila thanks her for coming and shows her into the staff room. Mary talks about the creative activities Ezra has been involved in at nursery and asks Prima what she has been doing at home. Prima laughs and talks about how Ezra has a dressing-up box and is always pretending to be a princess and acting out stories. Jamila asks how Jamie and Andre respond and Prima says it is a shame but they just laugh. Joshua tells them off, but if he is not there they do make fun of her. Mary asks if the boys and Ezra ever play together. Prima says they do for short periods of time but it always ends up with Ezra getting hurt when the boys get a bit rough. Through the discussion Prima agrees that Ezra does sometimes scream and hit out if she does not get her own way but she goes to her room with Prima to calm down.

Jamila and Mary talk through the strategies they have tried recently and the way Ezra has responded.

At the end of the meeting Mary summarises what they have agreed.

- Ezra is finding it difficult at the moment to sustain play with other children and may be getting anxious when things are not going her way.
- The adults all need to work together to reduce the number of screaming and hitting incidents.
- Increasing the praise when Ezra is positively involved in play and responding appropriately at home and nursery is likely to help.
- Prima and Joshua will try once a week to do an activity or outing with one of the boys and Ezra to help them respond more positively to each other.
- As Ezra may be confused by getting one-to-one adult attention when she has been hitting and screaming, Prima will talk to Joshua about saying, 'When you have stopped, then we can share a book'. Mary and Jamila will use the same phrase in nursery. While ensuring that Ezra won't hurt herself and is supervised, adults will stay out of range of her attempts to hit.
- If there is any hurting incident between children, practitioners will say firmly 'Stop! No hurting!' and give attention to the child who has been hurt.
- They will meet again in four weeks' time to think about the impact of the strategies but will update each other each week with progress.

Prima says she is sure Ezra will get through this phase soon but if changing things at home will help the staff at nursery she will do it.

Joshua arrives just before the open day finishes. Mary welcomes him and shows him some things Ezra has been making and photos of her creative play. She asks if he's happy about the change in response to Ezra's hitting and screaming. He smiles and says he doesn't think it will work and that she just needs to grow out of it, but as Prima wants to try it he will too.

Personal, social and emotional development

- Use photographs, puppets and stories to help all children name emotions and begin to explore what might make them feel particular emotions.
- For all staff to comment to Ezra when they notice her playing and interacting appropriately.

Communication, language and literacy

- Make a photograph book and video clip with small groups of children, including Ezra, taking part in creative play and encourage children to share these resources with their families.

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

- For Mary to work with Ezra and two other children to cook pizza and to share it with two other children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- Use children's recollections of making pizza, and real-life experience, as a starting point for creating a pizza café and support children to explore the roles of customer and staff.

Physical development

- Support Ezra to use the queuing system for the bikes once per week with Jamila.

Creative development

- For a practitioner other than Mary or Jamila to engage Ezra in exploring new material available for dressing up.

Progress noted

After one week

- Prima and Joshua reported an increase in screaming and hitting at home and are finding it difficult to maintain the strategies agreed.
- Doing something with one of the boys has worked well, especially when this was a creative activity or an activity involving making something. This has developed into each of the children getting some special time with either Mum or Dad, which has improved the boys' behaviour too.
- At nursery Ezra has responded more positively to other adults but the number of screaming and hitting incidents has increased to ten with adults. Using the 'When... then' strategy has reduced the length of the incidents to approximately three minutes. There have been four less hurting incidents with other children.

After three weeks

- At nursery incidents with Ezra hurting children have reduced to two. Screaming incidents with adults have reduced to six.
- Ezra has increased her interaction with a wider range of children in the group. She has been able to say that when she is cross she screams. She has been able to engage successfully with two other children at least once per day with adult support.
- Prima and Joshua report that although there are still the same number of incidents of screaming and hitting, they do not go on for so long. They find it very difficult not to say anything other than, 'When you have stopped, then we can share a book', but because things are now improving at nursery they agree to keep trying.

Further reading and additional materials

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Acknowledgements

Why love matters. How affection shapes a baby's brain

Extract from Gerhardt, S. (2004) *Why love matters. How affection shapes a baby's brain*, p.18, p.30, p.148.
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How Babies Think

Extract from Gopnick, A., Meltzoff, A. and Kuhl, P. (2001) *How Babies Think*. © Phoenix, Orion Publishing group. Used with kind permission.

The Philosophical Baby

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From Neurons to Neighbourhoods

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